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NSC BRIEFING NOTES

USSR

Khrushchev elected First Secretary of the Communist Party:

The election of Nikita S. Khrushchev as first secretary of the Communist Party does not appear to signify any change in the power relationship which has existed among the top Soviet leaders since Beria's purge. It merely confirms him in a position which he has in fact held since Malenkov left the Secretariat on 14 March. It also seems to be further evidence of the close ties which have existed between Malenkov and Khrushchev for many years.

Khrushchev, who is 59 years old, rose to political leadership in the Ukraine in 1938. In the same year he joined the all-powerful Politburo as an alternate member, *becoming a full member in 1939.* He worked closely with Malenkov when the latter headed the post-war committee for the ~~Restoration~~ of liberated areas, a committee of top-flight, trusted experts charged with revitalizing industry and reasserting communist control in areas overrun

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by the Nazis. In 1949, after transferring from the Ukraine to head Moscow's important regional party, he became a member of the Secretariat; along with Stalin and Malenkov the only man on both top bodies: The Politburo and the Secretariat. This move occurred at a time when Malenkov was considered to be responsible for top level personnel movements.

Since Beria's purge, Khrushchev has been moved up to third place in the rankings of Presidium members, following Malenkov and Molotov. However, his position as first secretary, and his prominence at the Supreme Soviet meetings in early August indicate that he is probably second only to Malenkov in actual influence.

Khrushchev is an agricultural expert and is generally credited with instigating the policy of consolidating the collective farms into larger units. Under this policy farms were reduced in number by almost two thirds from the beginning of 1950 to the end of 1952. On the other hand, Khrushchev's suggestion that peasants should be resettled in large towns was

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seriously criticized and never put into practice. The report on agricultural shortcomings which he presented to the Central Committee on 7 September, however, indicates that he is today directly responsible for Soviet agricultural affairs.

The decree on agriculture which resulted from Khrushchev's report follows closely the program for agriculture which Malenkov outlined at the recent session of the Supreme Soviet and has far reaching economic and political implications. It calls for a sharp increase in foods, fodder, and livestock. It emphasizes the necessity of giving the Soviet people a higher standard of living. It reflects, in effect, the failure of Stalin's policies of pressuring the peasants for higher productivity without offering them increased incentives and is Malenkov's answer to peasant discontent and indifference.

The decree also revealed that the Ministry of State Farms has been re-established. Other ministries, those concerned with trade, foodstuffs, and consumer goods have re-emerged as separate administrative units. This is an indication of the

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emphasis which the Malenkov government is placing upon raising the Soviet standard of living. These changes also suggest that the ministerial/^{mergers}following Stalin's death were pre-dominantly political in character and that the internal political scene is now stable enough to permit the delegation of responsibility necessary for more efficient administration.